

EVERY SESSION: ♦ MODELING ♦ ROLE PLAYING ♦ FEEDBACK ♦ HOMEWORK ♦ HW REVIEW ♦

Defining Characteristics:

Feelings: Youth: anger, irritability. Caregiver: frustration, anger, hopelessness.
 Thoughts: Youth: It's not fair, she (parent or friend) is out to get me, people are picking on me, no one gives me credit, he's the one who caused it.
Caregiver: My child is being disrespectful on purpose, I don't really like my child very much, something wrong with my child, trying to handle this child is too much.
 Behavior: Refusal to comply with instructions, talking back, verbal and physical aggression, throwing tantrums, acting out, breaking rules, destroying property.

Assessment: Clinical interview (specific behavioral problems, frequency, duration, intensity)
 Trauma Screen: always want to know trauma exposure.
 PSC-17 (clinical score is 7+ for externalizing, 7+ for attention, 15+ total)

I. Psychoeducation: Goal is to normalize feelings, empower the client, and instill hope for change.

Function of Behavior

- Almost all behavior serves a function -- gets something *wanted* (attention, stuff, control) or gets out of something *unwanted* (doing a chore, stopping fun activity, consequences, punishment).
- To change most child behavior, it is essential to change the environment (e.g., parent, teacher, others responses to behavior) so that the unwanted behavior no longer "works", and alternative, positive behaviors are rewarded and "work".

Functional Behavioral Analysis

- Define the problem behavior in clear terms: what it looks & sounds like (hitting a sibling, yelling at a caregiver) and its positive opposite (playing gently without hitting, using a calm tone of voice).
- Identify what the child is *getting* or *getting out of* (gets attention, avoids completing a chore).
- Identify what happens directly before (antecedent) and after (consequence) the behavior (this information is a window into what is triggering and reinforcing the behavior).
 - ASK: What was happening right before? What exactly did the child do? Then what did you do? What happened next? *Ask over and over....*How did the situation end?

Positive Parenting

Why it is best to focus on positives *first*. It helps engage children and encourages them to work towards change. They want to be good because it works. It is like "putting money in the bank". Goal is age appropriate behavior because child is motivated to make good choices, not due to fear or losing a power struggle.

Appropriate Behavioral Expectations

- Review and reinforce normal development, especially behavior that can be upsetting or appear deliberately provocative (testing limits, challenging parental authority, wanting more freedom).

How Tx Works

- Caregiver involved at every session, time limited (8-20 sessions), skills-based, in-session practice, skill use at home (HW), caregiver support (parenting is hard!).
- Prepare for problem behavior to get worse before it gets better once new expectations are in place. This is temporary; the child is trying harder to obtain the response that used to work (the function of the behavior). Use analogy of slot machine and why keep playing.

II. Behavior: Start here! Goal is to help the caregiver identify one specific behavior to focus on in session and the upcoming week. Teach 1-2 skills a week that have relevance to the ID'ed behavior; model and practice the skill in session using role plays, problem solve/discuss, then assign clear homework (HW) practice for the caregiver to use the skills that week. Start the next session with a review of the HW (how did it go, what was hard, what needs to be tweaked). Remember: progress happens due to changes the parent makes AT HOME, not by talking in session.

FBA: Conduct FBA for one specific behavior problem; then observe impact of parenting skills.

Positive Parenting Skills (teach one at a time)

- Increase positive time together: fun, 5-10 minute activity the child enjoys, not teaching.
- Specific praise (notice every time a positive opposite occurs—praise or acknowledge it).
- Selective attention (ignore attention seeking behavior, provide attention for desired behavior)
- Give effective instructions (e.g., tell what TO do (v what not to do), one target at a time, give choices, try not to do when child engaged in other activity that they like).
- Rewards Plan to increase the positive opposite
 - Consider the frequency of the behavior. Does the reward need to be something that can be given multiple times in a day? Once a week? Are stepping-stone rewards better?
 - Remember, reinforcing rewards are those that can be given right after the behavior, can be given frequently, and are meaningful to the child. This means caregiver may need to use tokens sometimes (tokens add up to later curfew, extra free time, Family Movie Night, etc.).
 - Watch for 'reward traps.' For example, if child needs to exhibit a behavior daily for a week to earn the reward (e.g., completing homework) and fail to do the behavior on Tuesday (so have lost the reward), what is the motivation to continue for the rest of the week? Or, if the reward is mismatched with the behavior (i.e., too large or too small).
- Consequences, if needed. Should be fair, time-limited, enforceable (caregiver has control), and consistent (Time Out, Privilege Removal).
- Home-School Link (if significant behavior problems at school): Rewards at home for report of specific positive behavior at school (need to build the teacher-parent communication link).

ALWAYS:

1) teach skill, 2) model skill, 3) role play skill, 4) provide feedback, 5) homework, 6) review homework.

Child and child-parent skills: (secondary to Positive Parenting)

- General social skills (e.g., making friends)
- Problem Solving
- Family communication

III. Feelings & Thoughts: Goal is to teach skills to manage/reduce distressing feelings (e.g., anger, frustration). Can be done with the child and/or with the caregiver (if caregiver's own emotional upset makes it challenging to stay calm and implement effective parenting techniques):

Emotion Regulation:

- **Feelings intensity rating strategy:** "Feelings thermometer," 0-10 scale, faces, etc. Applies to different feelings (use to determine how client feels before and after emotion regulation activities).
- **Relaxation:** Progressive Muscle Relaxation, yoga, meditation, visualization, exercise, to calm body tension and relieve stress.
- **Secret calming** (controlled breathing): Slow belly breathing for calming in the moment.
- **Distraction** (planned "focus shift" from negative thoughts by engaging in other activities): Listening to music, playing ball or a game, reading, engaging in an enjoyable hobby or activity.
- **Cognitive Coping:**
 - (for caregiver) "Stay calm, you can do this. He's not doing this to drive you crazy, he just wants to get his way. This will work."
 - (for child) "Take a deep breath and remember that if you follow directions right now, you can earn the reward." "Keep it cool. That kid is just trying to push my buttons."